

Report

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Migration and demographic patterns in Central-Eastern Europe



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Abstract

This report is a part of deliverable “D.6.2. Report on migration and demographic patterns in the EU CEE countries and potential source countries” from the project FUME – Future Migration Scenarios for Europe (870649), financed with the Horizon 2020 programme. In particular, this country report focuses on critical analysis of immigration data from Poland. The analysis consists of an overview of stock and flow data on migrants, including such dimensions as age groups, gender, country of origin, education levels and length of residence. This report is a first step in the analytical exercise of this deliverable which aims to determine migration potential from and to Poland and furthermore, to provide necessary data input for fine-tuning of the FUME migration projection model.

Poland as the biggest economy of the Central and Eastern Europe region is an example of a migration transition country. In just 5 years, Poland has changed from an intensive labor-exporting country into one of major destination countries for third-country nationals in the EU. This report presents the historical framework of this transformation, major national groups of immigrants and their demographic structure. It also provides critical analysis on the validity of various statistical sources of data, and draws some initial conclusions on the temporality/permanent nature of immigrants in Poland.

1. Introduction

Poland has been for decades a typical country of intensive emigration. The tradition of migration dates back to the 19th century, when Poles lived under the occupation of three powers: Russian Empire, Austro-Hungary and Prussia. Poles at that time migrated to Northern (the US and Canada) and Southern America (Brazil and Argentina) and to Western Europe (mostly Germany, but also Belgium and Netherlands). The stock of Polish diaspora in 1915 was estimated at 3.5 million, while in the interwar period an additional 1.6 million left the country. Interestingly, in spite of the fact that ca. one third of Poles went to the United States, the overall rate of return was reasonably high, ranging between 20 and 30 per cent (Okólski, 1999).

The Second World War is a painful period for Polish history, marked also with profound population movements, most of them involuntary. According to estimates of Dariusz Stola (1992), on the territories of pre-1939 and post-1945 Poland¹ ca. 12 million persons have been resettled or deported², thus making this the biggest forced population movement in the history of Europe. It is also important to mention, that pre-1939 Poland was a multi-ethnic country with more than 1/3 of its citizens declaring non-Polish nationality (mostly: Ukrainians, Jews, Byelorussians, Germans and Russians), and due to mostly forced movements during the Second World War and shortly after – Poland became for the first time in its history an almost ethnically homogenous state (Balogun & Joseph-Salisbury, 2020), with ca. 99 percent of its citizens declared Polish nationality (Banovic et al, 2019).

This trend in ethnic homogeneity has continued even after the collapse of communist system and during the economic transformation: in the 1990s and 2000s there were very limited inflows of foreign-born populations in Poland. In fact, until the mid-2010s the immigrant population in the country was marginal: according to official statistics in 2014 there were 121 thousand third-country nationals with residence permits and additional 60 thousand EU citizens living on Polish territory. In such a case, Polish immigrants constituted less than 0.5 percent of total population, which at that time was the lower share in the entire EU (Pędziwiatr & Brzozowski, 2015).

The situation has reversed in a quick way in the last few years, resembling to some extent the migration transitions of Spain and Italy in the 1990s. In 2014, the Ukrainian Revolution erupted. The subsequent secessions of the Crimea Region and Russian military intervention in Lugansk and Donetsk had created a wave of internal displaced persons and external economic migrants, most of which had arrived in Poland. This intensive immigration of Ukrainians in upcoming years, combined with rapid economic growth in Poland resulted in an increase of Ukrainian population in the country

¹ According to the Yalta Conference (1945) agreement between the US, Soviet Union and the UK, Poland territory has been changed and the borders were shifted from East to Curzon Line (Bug river) with some compensation on the West at the expense of Germany.

² Of course within these 12 million there were not only ethnic Poles, but also numerous Jews, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Germans and other ethnic groups.

to an estimated 1.3 million in Spring 2019 (Pędziwiatr et al., 2019). Surprisingly, from a country with lowest share of immigrant population in 2014, Poland currently leads among CEE countries in terms of immigrant flows (Sterniński, 2019; Pachocka et al., 2020), leading among EU member states in the number of first residence permits issued to non-EU citizens 2018 (635 thousand, cf. Eurostat, 2019). The structure of our report is the following: first we present the methodological approach adopted, define the basic terms and provide an overview of the statistical sources on immigration statistics in Poland. Then we provide data on immigrant stocks and flows in Poland, which is complemented by descriptive analysis and critical comments on the reliability of data provided. The final section concludes the report outlining the most important findings, discussing the limitations in statistical evidencing and suggesting puzzles for further research.





Picture: ElCarito/Unsplash.com

2. Methodology, Definitions and Sources

Methodological approach

Our study relies on desk research methods and critical data analysis. In the period of April-August 2020, our research team has gathered data on immigration statistics in Poland and all other CEE countries which are members of the European Union. For each country, the research team consisted of a junior researcher and senior researcher: in each case they are the final authors of each country's report. We have extracted data from the main statistical sources, including central statistical offices reports (Statistics Poland), existing academic surveys and studies and administrative registers such as register on residence permit or the social security evidence. The main focus of this analytical exercise has been put on immigration statistics: we have analysed and compared different statistics on migrant flows and stocks. This report provides a critical analysis of this data, including assessment of data reliability. For this purpose, we also have compared the publicly-available data with the existing estimations on immigrant flows provided by Abel & Cohen (2019) to assess its reliability. Finally, the results of reports were cross-checked and critically evaluated by other research teams (we had 3 research teams: 3 junior researchers and 3 senior researchers in total) to assure comparability of reports and its analytical quality.

Definitions of immigrants in Polish Statistics and evidencing of migrants in statistical registers

According to the Statistics Poland (formerly Central Statistical Office - GUS), immigrants are defined as individuals originating from a foreign country, and who desire to settle permanently or temporarily. Thus, immigrants are included within a wider category of individuals in Polish statistics, namely the foreigners. The foreigners are defined as persons who do not have Polish citizenship (GUS 2019). This understanding of foreigners has substantial implications for evidencing immigrants in the country: in the official statistics an immigrant is registered until the moment of naturalization and acquisition of Polish citizenship. Until recently, this bias in national statistics was marginal, as the numbers of naturalizations were very small: in 2002-2011 24.5 thousand persons received Polish citizenship – ca. 2.5 thousand a year. Yet, in recent years with more intensive inflow of immigrants to Poland these numbers are rapidly increasing: in 2018 5.2 thousand persons have acquired Polish citizenship (Kacprzak, 2019). This implies that immigrant definitions and statistics in Polish would gradually differ from the common understanding of immigrant definition adopted in the academic literature (where immigrants are usually defined as foreign-born persons, or persons having at least one foreign-born parent). This in turn means that in the future Polish authorities will have to reconsider the statistical system, by evidencing also foreign-born persons with Polish citizenship.

Another important channel for immigrant entry to Poland is the possibility of the acquisition of a Pole's Card (PC), which certifies the belonging to a Polish Nation, but does not equal with Polish citizenship. Originally PC could be issued to a member of Polish Diaspora residing in former USSR countries and to persons who – albeit having Polish ethnic origin were not legally entitled to Polish citizenship. Yet, starting from 14 July 2019 all members of Polish Diaspora from all over the world can apply for PC, provided that they can prove Polish ethnic origin and engagement in Polish cultural matters (for instance active role in Polish Diaspora organizations and some knowledge of Polish language). This means that the large number of Argentinians or Brazilians (see next section on Polish diaspora) with Polish ethnic origin might apply for this document in the nearest future – one should keep in mind this possibility, when we will consider migration potential to Poland from various sending countries.

The Pole's Card provides a set of privileges to a migrant, including free access to the labour market (no employment permits are needed), healthcare insurance, free education (including tertiary level) and a full right to open a business activity (equally to the Polish citizens). The PC document is automatically cancelled when the holder becomes permanent resident in Poland or/and obtains Polish citizenship.

Another problem with evidencing immigrants in Poland is very often their temporary stay in the country. This is a widespread problem in the entire EU, but in Poland this trend is aggravated by two additional avenues for third-country citizens entry. First is the facilitated cross-border movement of Ukrainians, which can easily enter Poland thanks to the non-visa regime for holders of biometric passports. This opens a possibility of non-evidenced stay and illegal work for shorter periods, i.e. up to three months. Another, even more important way to enter Poland as an immigrant is a simplified procedure of employment which includes the declaration on entrusting work to a foreigner. This procedure enables Polish employers to employ citizens of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine for a period of maximum 6 months.

As a result, the real numbers of short-term immigrants in Poland are very hard to estimate. Below we present data from various administrative sources: the numbers can vary substantially depending on the way the migrants are evidenced. That is why we provide comments for each data source, providing explanations on data limitations.





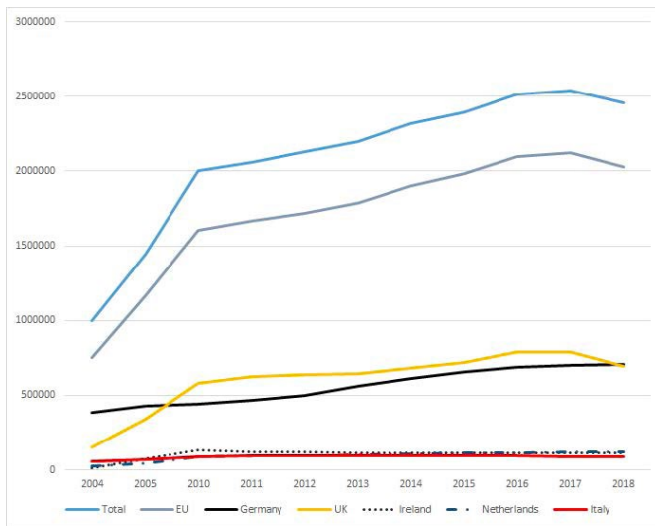
Picture: Mykyta Martynenko/Unsplash.com

3. Polish diaspora

Poles have been a traditional nation of migrants for nearly 2 centuries. In fact, the last major migration outflow from the country took place just after the entry to the European Union and is described in literature as post-accession migration (Coniglio & Brzozowski, 2018). In 2004 there were ca. 1 million Poles residing temporarily abroad, while in 2010 this number has doubled (Figure 1). The stock of migrants continued to grow between 2010 and 2016, after which it has stabilized at ca. 2.5 million. Around the same period Poland has turned from net emigration into net immigration country (see next section). The most important destinations for Poles are the EU countries, with notable domination of Germany and the United Kingdom. Other important destinations include Ireland, Netherlands and Italy. In most of this countries, the population of Polish migrants has been relatively stable in the last 5 years: the biggest waves of return migration took place during the Eurozone Financial Crisis (2008-2009, cf. Brzozowski et al., 2017). The only exception in this regard is the United Kingdom, from which some migrants re-emigrated as the result of Brexit referendum in 2016 and subsequent political changes.

Figure 1. Estimated stock of migrants from Poland residing temporarily abroad

Source: Statistics Poland (2019). Please note: migrants temporarily residing abroad are individuals staying abroad for more than 3 months (2 months for 2004-2005) at the end of a given year.



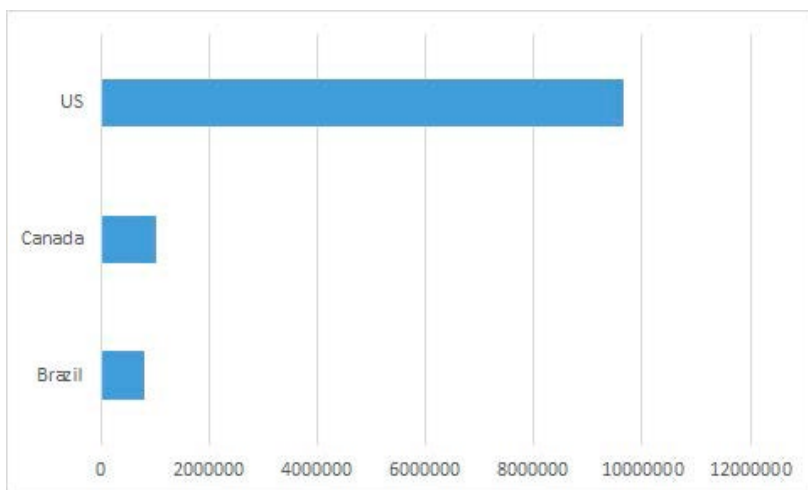
In terms of the demographic structure of Polish migrants who temporarily reside abroad, the most recent data is for the end of 2017 (see table 1). This population is balanced in terms of gender, and much younger as compared to Polish population in the country. Persons below 20 years comprise 14 per cent, which clearly demonstrates that many contemporary migrants stay abroad with their children. In total, migrants below 40 years of age account for 59 per cent of total expatriate population.

Table 1. Demographic structure of Poles temporarily residing abroad at the end of 2017
Source: Statistics Poland (2018).

Age groups (years)	Total (in thousands)	Males (in thousands)	Females (in thousands)
Total	2540.0	1263.6	1276.4
0-4	80.9	42.4	38.4
5-9	92.7	48.2	44.5
10-14	95.0	49.0	46.0
15-19	87.3	44.4	42.9
20-24	143.4	71.1	72.3
25-29	244.9	119.9	125.0
30-34	369.9	178.9	191.0
35-39	377.8	189.7	188.1
40-44	265.2	137.7	127.5
45-49	189.9	97.4	92.5
50-54	173.5	87.9	85.6
55-59	159.3	80.3	79.1
60-64	115.8	56.6	59.2
65-69	61.1	28.6	32.5
70-74	30.0	12.9	17.1
75 and more	53.5	18.7	34.8

Yet, as Polish migration dates back to the 19th century, the number of Polish diaspora is much larger than described above. According to Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at least³ 15 millions of people in the world belong to Polonia (a traditional name used for Polish diaspora), i.e. has ethnic Polish origin. The full list of countries with corresponding numbers of Polish diaspora estimates are provided in the Appendix (Table 1), here we just present the three major host countries for Polish diaspora (Figure 2). These were the traditional host countries for Poles in late 19th and early to mid 20th century. The most important destination is of course the United States: ca. 9.6 million of Americans have Polish ethnic ancestry. But also Canada (1 million) and Brazil (800 thousand) host numerous Polish diaspora. Keeping in mind that most of these individuals might be entitled to apply for Pole's Card, the migration potential from these countries can be substantial, depending on the development perspectives of Polish economy in the near future.

Figure 2. Top 3 destinations of Polish diaspora (persons with Polish ethnic origin) in 2014
Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014).



³ For the sake of this analysis, we apply the lower threshold of estimate as in our view the highest threshold provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is unrealistic.



Picture: ElCarito/Unsplash.com

4. Immigrant stock in Poland

As the last general census in Poland had been conducted in 2011, the need for alternative up-to-date statistics emerged. An alternative source may be The Office for Foreigners (UdSC) gathering data on the legalization of stay and international protection. According to the report from June 2020⁴ 447 thousand foreigners possess valid documents allowing for stay on the Polish territory. 75% of the issued applications for a stay permit regard to future work in Poland. 59% of the valid documents concern temporary stay and only 18% permanent stay. At the same time, 4,8 thousand persons were provided with any kind of international or national protection. The dominant citizenship among foreigners in Poland remains Ukrainian (233 thousand). Other frequent citizenships are: Belarussian (27 thousand), German (21 thousand), Vietnamese (12 thousand), Indian (10 thousand), Italian (8,5 thousand), Chinese (8,3 thousand), Georgian (6,8 thousand) and British (6,3 thousand). It is worth noting that ca. 20 thousand documents allowing stay in Poland have expired in the period between 14th March and 31st May 2020, i.e. during the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic in Poland and subsequent lockdown measures⁵. All the people whose documents have become invalid in this period are allowed to legally stay in the country.

Apart from data on the stay of foreigners in Poland, other statistics - like those of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy (MRPiPS, 2019) - involve data specifically on working migration. In 2019 the number of all work permits consisted of ca. 445 thousand, of which almost 330,5 thousand related to Ukrainians and other most frequent citizenships including: Belarussian (27 thousand), Nepalese (9 thousand), Moldavian (8 thousand) and Indian (8 thousand, cf. MRPiPS, 2019). In the first half of 2020 more than 198 thousand work permits have been issued, also predominantly for Ukrainians (over 145 thousand) and Belarussians (over 12 thousand), followed in frequency by Georgian and Indian citizenships (MRPiPS, 2020).

It is important to note that the most popular procedure to legalize one's stay by a so-called third-country citizen is by the declaration of entrusting work to a foreigner (previously "declaration of the intention to entrust work to a foreigner"). This migration scheme includes temporary migrants, as the declaration system allows immigrants to undertake paid work for a period up to 6 months. In 2019 almost 1,8 million declarations have been made in regional labour offices (PUP), ca. 1,6 million of which registered (PSZ, 2019). However, one person may declare more than one workplace so a more adequate way of concluding the number of actual foreigners is to look at recently initiated data on persons, whom the declarations concern⁶. Therefore, the real estimate of immigrants who came under this regime in 2019 include ca. 1 million foreigners, including ca. 970 thousand Ukrainians. Other citizens eligible to benefit from this procedure - Armenians, Belarussians, Georgian, Moldavians and Russians - consisted of no more than 50 thousand per each group (PSZ, 2019). In the first half of 2020 to almost 480 thousand is related to at least one declaration procedure, and almost 426

⁴ Informacja o działalności UdSC, 1.05.2020 r., R. X. Ogólne trendy, Warszawa 8 czerwca 2020 r.

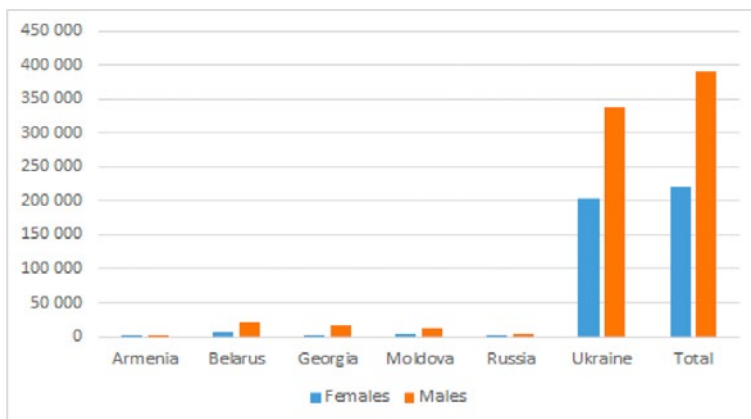
⁵ The lockdown of the economy had been fully implemented on 24th March 2020, but already on 15th schools and international borders have been closed. Most of the restrictions, including partial shutdown of public administration offices, lasted till the end of May 2020.

⁶ It is estimated that the real number of immigrants based on this procedure is no more than 60% of the declarations.

thousand of which are Ukrainians (PSZ, 2020)⁷. Unfortunately, data on the demographic characteristics of foreigners who came to Poland within this scheme is limited. The public authorities report only the gender and country of origin of immigrants (Figure 4). Yet, we can clearly see that this scheme of temporary migration is dominated by males, who comprise 64 percent of total immigrant stock. For some groups this masculinization is even more pronounced - in the case of Georgians 86.5 percent of migrants are males.

Figure 3. Gender and country of origin of immigrants arrived within a declaration of entrusting work to foreigner (first half of 2020)

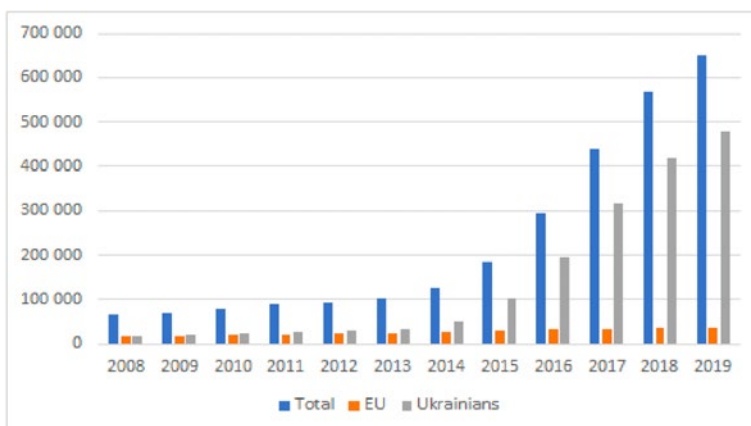
Source: PSZ (2020).



Another source of migration are the registers of the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS). These statistics show another picture of immigration to Poland, focusing mostly on long-term migrants. According to ZUS, there have been over 650 thousand foreigners insured in Polish system of social insurance (ZUS, 2020). The evolution of the immigrant population in this system is the same as in the case of other statistical sources: the dynamic increment of foreign workers can be observed from 2015 onwards and it can be mostly attributed to Ukrainians (74 per cent, see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Immigrants registered in Polish Social Insurance Institution (ZUS)

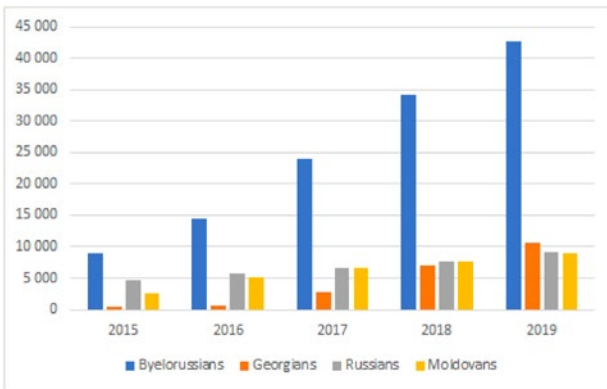
Source: ZUS (2020).



⁷ Oświadczenia o powierzeniu wykonywania pracy - informacje podstawowe, I półrocze 2020

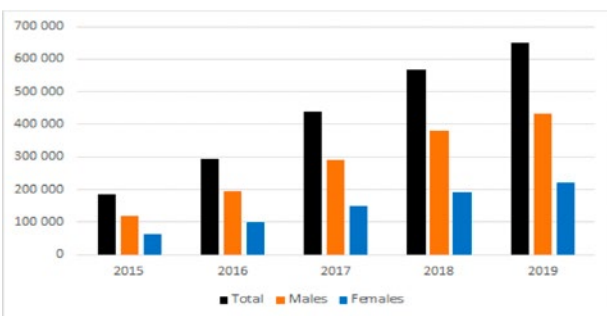
Nevertheless, in recent years we can also see a fast increment of the immigrant population from other Eastern European countries (ex Soviet Union republics), namely Belarus, Moldova, Georgia and also Russia (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Immigrants from Eastern Europe (without Ukraine) in ZUS system
Source: ZUS (2020).



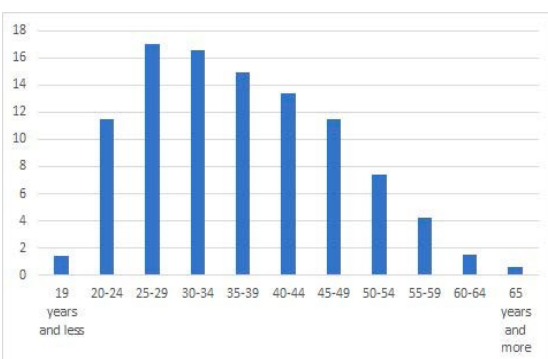
When it comes to the gender of foreigners registered in the social insurance system, the dominance of males is visible and systematic in spite of the dynamic increase of immigrants in recent years (Figure 4). Males account for ca. 2/3 of migrants registered at ZUS in 2019 (66 per cent, see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Gender of foreigners registered in social insurance system (ZUS)
Source: ZUS (2020).



In terms of the age structure of immigrants registered in ZUS, the structure is slightly biased towards over-representation of younger workers. Persons aged below 35 years make up almost half (46.5 per cent) of the population (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Age structure of immigrants registered in Polish social insurance system (in %, 2019)
Source: ZUS (2020).



The distinct dominance of foreigners with Ukrainian citizenship in Poland is connected to a variety of reasons. First of all Ukraine, as a post-Soviet neighbouring country, has long had historic and cultural relations with Poland. Geographic proximity, relatively similar language and costs of living are the usually identified pull factors in this case (Stola, 1997). Undoubtedly also the simplified stay and work legalization procedures contributed significantly to the attractiveness of Poland as a destination country for Ukrainian migrants (OSW, 2017; Górny et al., 2018). Additionally, given that Ukrainian large scale migration flow to Poland has lasted at least since the 1990's, expanded migration nets in this host country ease such migration process - from its organization to adaptation. Pull factors typically and also in this case intertwine with push factors. One of them is economic events that took part in Ukraine after it declared independence from the USSR in 1991: "such as restructuring of the post-Soviet economy and labour markets, the significant rise in unemployment, long delays in payments of salaries, and currency and wage inflation" (Fedyuk & Kindler, 2016: 3). Decades later the aspiration for higher living standards, i.e. higher wages, still drives Ukrainians out of their home country (Ibidem). Even now the country struggles with a high corruption rate which influences educational and professional perspectives. This results in many young people aspiring to study and work in "Europe" in order to gain a greater chance for their achievements to be recognized internationally (Chwat, 2020). Last but not least, the political crisis that occurred in Ukraine in 2014 posed as additional motivation for emigration (Jóźwiak & Piechowska, 2017).



Picture: [Danyil Shymchenko/Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com/photos/82)

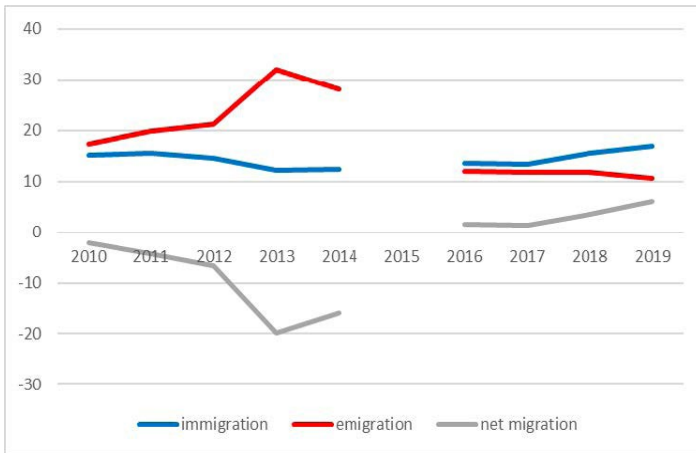
5. Immigrant flows in Poland

Immigrant flow estimation in Poland, as for many other countries of the EU is problematic due to statistical and legal regulations. As the member of the EU and of the Schengen agreement, Poland has no border control and registration of passage with other EU members⁸. As a result, many immigrants can freely move into Poland from other EU countries, the same applies also for EU citizens. Additionally, Statistics Poland for evidencing emigration and immigration flows still evidences these events based on a permanent place of residence data (zameldowanie), which is an administrative relic of communist era. In principle, a person is declared as an emigrant when one deregisters from residence with a purpose to settle permanently abroad, and is registered as immigrant when registered with a purpose to settle permanently in Poland. As such, this definition is problematic and does not capture the vast majority of in- and out-migration flows in Poland. For instance, a temporary migrant from Poland to the UK usually will not deregister from the national register, in spite of the fact that the “temporality” of one’s migration span can last for years. Moreover, the returnees from international migration are not identified separately from immigrants who are foreign-born. This is a serious issue for statistical recording, as after 2004 circa. 1.3-1.5 million Poles have migrated to Western European countries, of which ca. 40-50 per cent have returned to Poland by 2010-2011 (Brzozowski et al., 2015). This implies that returnees are a source of potential bias when evidencing immigration flows. Finally, and the most important bias is the fact that albeit registering place of residence is mandatory, many immigrants who stay temporarily in Poland do not fulfil this obligation, and the more established (albeit not definitely settled) immigrants register in the system as temporary residence, which in turn is not evidenced as immigration in Statistics Poland registers.

Consequently, the contemporary data on immigration and emigration flows from Statistics Poland are to a great extent underestimated (Figure 8). Just looking at sheer data on immigration, according to official register between 2016 and 2019 (data for 2015 is not available due to poor quality of data according to Statistics Poland) in total 59.2 thousand immigrants have arrived to Poland, while according to most reliable estimates the number of Ukrainians alone has jumped from 38 thousand in December 2013 to 1.3 million in May 2019 (Stonawski et al., 2019). Moreover, according to Abel and Cohen dataset (2019) only in the 5-year period between 2011 and 2015 more than 182 thousand people immigrated to Poland, out of them 61.6 thousand from Ukraine.

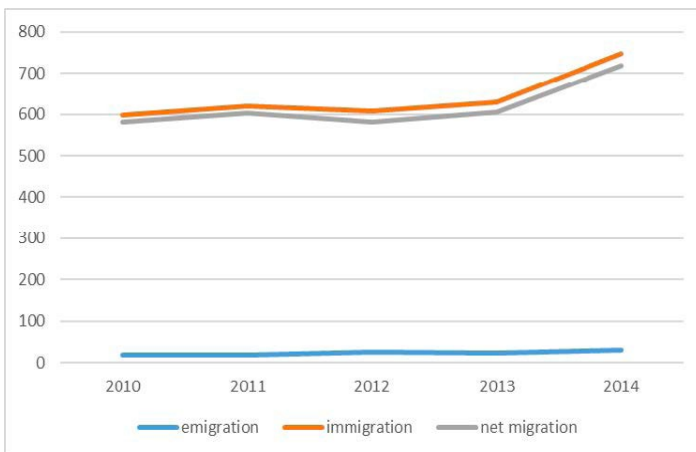
⁸ Although due to covid-19 pandemic for some periods the border control has been re-installed.

Figure 8. Immigration and emigration flows to Poland (in thousands)
 Source: Statistics Poland (2020).



When comparing Statistics Poland data on immigrant flows with estimates of Abel and Cohen (2019) we can see an even greater discrepancy when it comes to the biggest sending country - Ukraine, which officially accounts for 70 per cent of contemporary migration stock in Poland (Stonawski et al., 2019). Yet, the data from Statistics Poland seems to capture the dynamics of change in migration flows well, but fails to account for its absolute volume.

Figure 9. Migration between Ukraine and Poland (bilateral flows)
 Source: Statistics Poland (2020).





Picture: Jacek Dylag/Unsplash.com

6.Scenario narratives for Poland

This chapter focuses on the existing migration potential of Poland as a sending and host country, taking into account the analysis of important push and pull factors from such important dimensions as demographic structure, economy, technology, social attitudes, governance indicators and existing cultural, economic and geographical bilateral relations with important sending and host countries. As such, these scenario narratives do not aim to foresee the migration future of Poland, but rather to outline the possible future directions in which demographic processes can develop, including international migration.

6.1. Analysis of country's migration potential

In this section, we focus on the migration potential of Polish country, taking into account six dimensions, namely: demography, economy, technology & technological development, society, governance and environment.

The demographic prospects for Poland look grim: the country is facing a serious population ageing process. The population projection for years 2014-2050 prepared by Central Statistical Office (CSO, 2014) points out at dramatically falling fertility and the number of births. The total fertility rate has fallen from 2.07 in 1991 to mere 1.26 in 2013 (second lowest in Europe, after Portugal) with a continued downward trend. The number of births has fallen from 550 thousands in 1990-1991 to just 396.6 thousand in 2013. These trends are the results of a changing pattern of females' career choice, extended length of education (including tertiary level) and shifting cultural patterns, including the growing preference to live in informal relationships or without a partner (Mynarska, 2010). These changes in turn impacted on the mean age at childbirth, which is constantly rising from 26.2 in 1990 to 29 years in 2013.

The social policies that impact on fertility decisions are ineffective: the tax exemption for having a child (or children) is considered as too low, and the newly (from 2016) established allowance 500+ (500 pln for each child) works rather as a social benefit which decreases income inequality, than an instrument that encourages young families to have more children. This is because the institutionalized care system for children is poorly developed, especially in small and middle-size cities (CSO, 2014).

At the same time, the life expectancy at birth has increased substantially between 1991 and 2012: by 7 years for males (73.1 years) and 6 years for females (81.1 years). Yet, when it comes both to life expectancy and especially healthy life expectancy, Poland lags behind EU average. The healthy life expectation at 65 years was just 7.4 years, which implies a growing need for care services for elderly persons in the future. Yet, as the traditional model of familial care for the elderly is eroding due to cultural and demographic (i.e. internal and international migration) factors, the big challenge for the future would be to secure enough caregivers for Polish seniors (Surdej and Brzozowski, 2012).



The demographic prospects for Poland look grim: the country is facing a serious population ageing process. The population projection for years 2014-2050 prepared by Central Statistical Office (CSO, 2014) points out at dramatically falling fertility and the number of births. The total fertility rate has fallen from 2.07 in 1991 to mere 1.26 in 2013 (second lowest in Europe, after Portugal) with a continued downward trend.

As the result the population projection prepared in 2014 estimated in the middle scenario the Polish population in 2050 at 33.95 million, a decrease by 4.55 million (12 per cent) in relation to 2013. Moreover, the structure of population is expected to be less favourable than currently, with ca. 1/3 of the population aged 65+. Moreover, as for 2021 we have to admit that although some of the assumed measures in population projection were higher than expected - for instance, the total fertility has increased, reaching 1.419 in 2019, the other assumptions of the projection were less realistic - in particular, the projection was based on the official statistics of immigration and emigration flows, which, as we have shown before, are greatly underestimated. Consequently, the migration saldo for 2013-2015 period was definitely less favourable than assumed one, while after 2015 the immigration magnitude was in fact much bigger than expected. These changes in demographic processes might impact on the future projections, with an expected population size slightly bigger than foreseen in 2013. Yet, the demographic shortages in upcoming decades seem inevitable, and promoting immigration might be one of few ways to compensate for these deficiencies. When it comes to future emigration flows, the magnitude of outflows from Poland should gradually decline due to falling numbers of highly-mobile young individuals, yet – as stressed by Hein de Hass (2007), even in the case of the last stage of migration hump, the external emigration volumes should stay at moderate levels due to other types of outflows, such as lifestyle migration, retirement migration, educational migration and economic migration associated with career development of Poles.

When it comes to economic aspects, the Polish economy has experienced a period of dynamic economic growth in the last 2 decades, becoming the important labour market for EU citizens and third-country nationals in Central and Eastern Europe. Even the covid-19 pandemic, which has negatively affected all the EU economies, had a milder effect in Poland as compared to their closest neighbours in CEE, including Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia. Yet, the current level of uncertainty due to pandemic is high, and Poland has serious strategic challenges lying ahead, including the reconstruction of energy market (mostly gradually dropping reliance on coal and increasing the renewable energy sources), need to reconcile the aim of making the economy more innovative and competitive with the goal of making labour market more inclusive for ageing workforce etc. Nevertheless, the short-term economic projections remain very positive – according to a recent OECD study, the GDP should grow by 2.9 per cent in 2021 and 3.8 per cent in 2022 (OECD, 2021). If such favourable conditions are met, Poland will continue as an important magnet for immigrants from neighbouring countries of Eastern Europe, but also for more distant locations as well.

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Poland is considered as a developed economy, which yet still lags behind the top EU economies when it comes to the level of technological innovativeness (OECD, 2021). In particular, the geographic position of Poland makes it an important manufacturing centre for the car, household appliance and furniture industry in Europe. Farming still plays a relatively important role in the national economy, while the tourist industry – excluding the shock caused by covid-19 pandemic – is expanding fast. Most of these sectors are already undergoing the rapid automatization and digitalization, which is additionally enhanced by forced distant work caused by covid-19 lockdowns. Yet, the demand for immigrants is still expected to grow, as one of the most important industries which drive economic growth are ICT services (Pędziwiatr et al., 2019) and immigrants are becoming part of the workforce in this aspect. Additionally, the pandemic has led to an increase in the transport and courier services, a sector which employs many migrants. Moreover, due to erosion of the traditional family care model and increased ageing population process, the need for care services for the elderly persons is expected to grow intensively in upcoming decades, a sector already with a high proportion of immigrant workforce (Maj & Kubiciel-Lodzinska, 2020).

Poland is currently governed by right-wing political party PiS (Law & Justice), which has won the parliamentary elections using anti-refugee rhetoric in the campaign. Paradoxically under this government the country has become the major destination for third-country immigrants in the EU. Yet, it is important to bear in mind that the perception of foreigners and immigrants in particular in Polish society is not favourable: according to Global Attitudes Survey 2018 commissioned by PEW Research Center, 50 per cent of respondents claimed that “immigrants are a burden to a country”, 52 per cent of interviewed Poles expressed the opinion that “immigrants want to be distinct” and not integrate, and the same share of respondents indicated that “immigrants increase the risk of terrorism”. The favourable opinions on immigrants have eroded since the last survey in 2014 due to increased inflow of immigrants from 2015 onward (PEW Research Center, 2019). Yet, it has to be borne in mind that a vast majority of contemporary immigrants in Poland are “invisible” – as ca. 75 per cent come from a neighbouring Ukraine which is very close in cultural terms to Poland, their socio-economic and cultural integration is relatively easy, in spite of the lack of official integration policy of the state in this aspect (Matyja et al., 2015).

Therefore, with expected ethnic diversification of the immigrant population in Poland, the biggest challenge for Poland is the adoption of a sound diaspora, migration and integration policies. In particular, the competition for skilled workers might be particularly difficult due to geographical proximity to German economy.

In the case of environmental changes, Poland is not expected to be greatly affected by the climate changes in upcoming years. The biggest challenge is the air quality in biggest cities, which is connected with the reform of energetic policy and a gradual shift from coal as a main source of energy. Nevertheless, Poland is in a relatively favourable position, as it is not seriously endangered by rising sea levels, land erosion or even droughts.

6.2. Existing migration networks in Poland

Due to a communist past migration networks in Poland feature mostly young and relatively few migrants. Most of the immigrants belong to the first migrant generation. In Poland eight largest migrant groups are distinguished, namely: Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Germans, Vietnamese, Russians, Indians, Italians and Chinese. Anyway it is stated that “foreigners with Ukrainian and Belarusian citizenship accounted for almost three quarters of all persons with valid documents confirming the right of permanent residence in Poland in 2019” (GUS, 2019: 135).

The major migration network in Poland is composed of Ukrainians, whose figures are steadily growing from year to year. For instance, the number of Ukrainians holding valid residence permits in 2018 was 179 thousand, in 2019 - 215 thousand (GUS, 2019: 132) and in 2020 - 244 thousand (UdSC, 2021).

The largest number of Ukrainians registered in Poland in 2020 partially stems from immigrants’ situation during the pandemic. In order to have access to financial support, health service and insurance many foreigners decided to leave the grey market and find legal employment. Therefore, the growing number of Ukrainians or other nationalities may not result from increased inflow of population but completing procedures related to legalization of stay (Brzozowski et al., 2020: 22).

Paradoxically, it is assumed that the influx of Ukrainians in the following years to Polish state will slowly decrease due to improvement of the economic situation in Ukraine. Since 2019 Ukrainian state has shown GDP growth, poverty decline, governmental reforms aiming at boosting investment and finance security. (World Bank, 2019). As a result, Ukrainians will be more likely to stay in their homeland. Moreover, Ukraine may report an inflow of returning migrants. In this case Poland is likely to experience secondary population outflow which would be very risky due to the demographic situation of the state. On the other hand, the recent (April 2021) military maneuvers of Russian troops at Russian-Ukrainian border signalize that the conflict between those two countries is not over yet, which can drive out migration from Ukraine to Poland.



Picture: ElCarito/Unsplash.com

Peculiarly, Ukrainians especially tend to settle not only in the largest Polish cities but also in towns. This feature is not only a manifestation of the quantity of the group but also labour demand of the Polish labour market. Ukrainian citizens at the most fill the gap in the structure of employment which is disrupted by insufficient birth rate.

The second largest network in Poland is composed of Belarussians. The figures in 2018 remained 20 thou., in 2019 - 25 thou. (GUS, 2019: 132) and in 2020 29 thou. (UdSC, 2021).

It is estimated that the number of Belarussians in Poland will increase due to the hostile political climate in Belarus. As a result of growing political violence and authoritarian sentiments Belarus is likely to produce intensified outflow of population in the following months or even years. Moreover, pro-Polish attitude of Belarussians will enhance migration to Poland unlike neighbouring states.

The third largest group of immigrants in Poland are German citizens. Their number oscillates at around 20 thousand people per year and did not change significantly over time (UdSC, 2021). Presence of Germans in the Polish labour market is mainly a result of economic competitiveness and friendly conditions. Furthermore, economic growth and financial stability on the Polish market will result in slight or none changes regarding the number of German immigrants in Poland.

In Poland, Vietnamese and Russians are relatively close groups when it comes to population size. In 2019 the number of both nationalities was estimated at 12 thousand persons. The growth rate of these two groups was not so spectacular as in the case of Ukrainians and Belarussians. Over six years the number of Russians increased by 17 percent, in turn the number of Vietnamese - 34 percent. (GUS, 2019: 132). In light of these words it is argued that the number of Russians and Vietnamese will not tend to increase considering the low birth rate among these two groups.

Regarding the period of 2014 - 2019 immigrants from India are featured as the third fastest growing community in Poland. Most of them are students concentrated in the big cities. Bearing in mind India's demographic potential we can assume that the number of Indians in Poland will increase significantly within the following years. However, the number of Indians in Poland did not reach 10 thousand so far (GUS, 2019: 132).

Another two immigrant groups in Poland are Italians and Chinese which in 2019 oscillated around 8 thousand persons. There is no information base about these two networks so education, occupation and marital status remains unknown. We can only assume that Chinese will be more prone to grow as a community in comparison to Italians. It has been conditioned by two determinants, namely demography and political atmosphere of the origin countries.

6.3. Re-emigration policy

The government claims its own strategy to deal with an insufficient birth rate. Migration trend that Polish authorities eagerly follow is re-emigration. It applies to members of Polish diaspora who feel tied to Poland and its culture.

For migrants, whose ancestors emigrated throughout the last centuries, Pole's Card (PC) provides a number of benefits that were mentioned in part "Methodology, Definitions and Sources". The one who wants to claim his/her Polish attainment needs to prove the language proficiency by means of the appropriate certificate and to be knowledgeable about Polish culture and history. The latter one is verified during conversation between the applicant and the consul.

According to the statistics, the Pole's Card enjoys continuing recognition with slightly increasing tendency: in 2015 23 thou. PC decisions were granted, in 2016 - nearly 27 thousand, in 2017 - 30 thousand, in 2018 - 34 thousand and in 2019 - 33 thousand. The major countries where the Pole's Card was accepted are Belarus and Ukraine. The remaining countries are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, Russia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (GUS, 2020:466). Moreover, it is expected that the numbers of new PCs will increase due to recent change in policy (2019, see chapter 2 on details) which enables numerous members of Polish diaspora in the US, Canada, Brazil and Argentina to apply for this document. In this regard, especially Brazil with a diaspora population estimated at 800 thousand persons might turn to become an important sending country, as it is currently the hardest-hit economy by covid-19 pandemic and economic recession might be a strong push factor for many Brazilians with Polish ethnic ancestry to move to Poland.

Another dimension of Polish re-emigration policy is repatriation back to Poland. A person who permanently lives in the territories of Caucasus and Central Asia countries and is able to prove Polish origin will be repatriated to Poland and settled in an adaptation centre targeted for repatriates. The repatriate's stay in such a centre should not last longer than ninety days. During the stay repatriants take part in training sessions concerning the health care system, education system, public security, family policy and the labour market and workers' rights (MSWiA, 2018).

Importantly, the number of repatriates increases as the time passes. In 2010 the figure was 139 persons, in 2015 - 142, in 2016 - 354, in 2017 - 298, in 2018 - 717 and in 2019 - 870. The dominant group of repatriates comes from Kazakhstan while others from Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Russia and Uzbekistan (GUS, 2020: 463).

Although during the last five years the number of visas for repatriates and PC grants gradually grew it should be noted that the population with Polish ethnic background is bounded. What is more, newcomers from diaspora do not differ significantly from Polish citizens regarding family growth patterns. In other words, it is very likely that the fertility pattern of the former Polish diaspora members would not be sufficient to cope with a low birth rate in Poland.

6.4. Receiving refugees

Although Poland is traditionally an emigration state it does not receive refugees on a large scale. In the first two quarters of 2020 the major group of asylum seekers in Poland came from Russia (816 persons). Besides, refugees have come from Ukraine (144 persons), Tajikistan (58 persons), Georgia (34 persons) and Turkey (34 persons) (UdSC, 2020).

According to the statistics, Polish state grants international protection mainly to residents from Former Eastern Bloc countries. Importantly, only a small proportion of asylum seekers are granted a positive decision. In the period of 2010-2019 the refugee status was granted to 4.3 thousand foreigners even though the number of foreigners who have applied for international protection in this period of time in Poland reached a total of 158 thousand. (GUS, 2019: 165-166).

However, refugee status is not the sole way for asylum seekers to grant protection. Following the enactment of the Act on Foreigners on 1 May 2014 the applicants for protection may receive three independent status forms: subsidiary protection, permit for tolerated stay and residence permit for humanitarian reasons.

6.5. Recruitment agencies

Recruitment agencies are worth mentioning. They actively engage foreigners in Polish labour market. This type of institution aims at legalisation of stay, labour training and successful employment therefore it is an attractive option for future migrants.

Increasing labour demand caused acquisition of migrants not only from Former Eastern Bloc countries like Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia or Kazakhstan, but also from geographically and culturally distant regions. For instance, recruitment agencies started to source immigrants from Bangladesh, India, Philippines, Singapore, Viet Nam and Indonesia.

In accordance with the new trend it is assumed that Polish state will receive numerous migrants from remote countries which will implicate ethnic and religious diversity in traditionally homogenous Poland.

6.6. Cultural and language proximity

Taking into consideration the resilience of migrant networks in Poland, cultural and language proximity remains a key determinant. It is inferred that migrants with Slavic origin accommodate quicker and easier, being knowledgeable in language and culture. In other words, linguistic resemblance and familiar customs play a significant role in migrants' adaptation process. Hence, it is assumed that Ukrainians and Belorussians are the most resilient migrant networks in Poland which is evidenced by the number and social status of members of the groups.

Additionally, it is commonly reckoned that migrants from Former Eastern Bloc countries adapt more successfully in Poland in comparison to newcomers without such a background. Comprehension of post-communist residues like administration realm or social and political structure allows the immigrants to function more successfully in the new country.



Picture: Emma Shulzhenko/Unsplash.com

6.7. Pandemic

Necessarily to note, Covid-19 pandemic has a major impact on all life domains including international migration. In this regard three main consequences for migrants should be mentioned. The most prominent pandemic implication is closing borders which influences nearly all aspects of transnational life namely transport and communication. It applies notably to family links and mobility. Furthermore, spread of the disease impeded short-term mobility which drastically impinged temporary migration flows.

The economic lockdown due to pandemic has speeded up the digital revolution in many companies, when firms were often forced to shift to remote work and employees are in the home office. This trend might be continued even after the pandemic expires, leading to substantial shifts in employment preferences – in the short run, skilled migrants are in a better position than unskilled ones, being able to shift easily to remote work. In the long run, the digitalisation of the workplace might lead to a situation in which geographical migration in some sectors (esp. in the ICT sector) might no longer be needed, as persons could work from their home countries.

The other economic consequence in the short run was the vulnerability of migrants on the labour market and downward trend in their economic integration. Job loss or its risk, irregular payment and partially economic freeze can be detrimental especially for migrants employed at the grey market as being vulnerable workers. Last but not least remains population decline. This fairly obvious pandemic effect is significant in terms of international migration analysis. Regarding Polish state-orientation, the pandemic emphasised the dramatic demographic situation in Poland and the urgent need for a migrant labour force.



Picture: Adam Borkowski/Unsplash.com

7. Conclusions: Covid-19 pandemic: possible effects on immigration

This report has presented an outline of immigration trends in Poland. Poland has undergone a migration transition, turning from net-exporting to net immigration country. The immigration potential of the country is growing due to sustained economic growth and demographic shortages of the national population, which would aggravate in the next decades. The most important sending country is currently Ukraine, although in the long-run the demographic potential of this eastern Polish neighbour is limited. Yet, the most recent trends indicate a growing potential of flows from other Eastern European countries such as Moldova, Georgia or Belarus. Moreover, Poland has still not capitalized upon a great potential of its diaspora, which is estimated at 2.5 million recent migrants (persons born in Poland and residing abroad) plus ca. 15 million persons with Polish ethnic origin worldwide. The Pole's Card as an instrument facilitating migration of persons with Polish ethnicity can become a way to promote a more diversified inflow of foreigners from third countries, including such locations as Latin America (Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina), Northern America (Canada and the US), Australia and South Africa.

Covid-19 pandemic, which started in February 2020 and after a short summer relief period has attacked with a greater force all major EU countries, has obviously a deep impact on population movements and immigration in particular. The restrictions imposed on cross-border movements, economic crisis due to lockdown of some sectors (mostly tourism, but also transport, restaurant and leisure services) would make migration more difficult. Nevertheless, at the current point in time it is almost impossible to determine what would be the long-term impact of Covid-19 on immigration potential of Poland. In the first phase of pandemic (1st half of 2020) Polish economy was faring relatively well, and the government aid to entrepreneurs prevented a country from a major recession. Yet, the new wave of pandemic in fall/winter 2020/2021 seems to have a greater impact: with new cases of infections surpassing 20 thousands persons a day, this could lead to the socio-economic destabilization of the country.

Yet, at the current moment the authors could only comment on the recent data on temporary work permits for seasonal migration: as for entire 2019 there were 273 thousand permits issued (mostly to Ukrainians - 268 thousand), in the first half the number of these permits has already reached 228 thousand, including 223 thousand Ukrainians (MRPiPS, 2020). Albeit this data does not fully reflect all migration movements, it is a strong predictor of these processes and suggests that the popularity of Poland as one of the major destination countries in the EU is still visible.

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Appendix

Table 2. Polish diaspora (individuals with Polish ethnic origin) by country (2014)
Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014)

Argentina	120000
Australia	170000
Austria	90000
Belgium	100000
Belarus	295000
Brazil	800000
Bulgaria	3500
Croatia	2500
Czech Republic	130000
Cyprus	300
Denmark	38770
Estonia	1970
Finland	3000
France	1000
Greece	14145
Spain	90000
Ireland	12258
Iceland	10224
Canada	1021000

Kazakhstan	34000
Kyrgyzstan	1200
Lithuania	200000
Luxembourg	3432
Latvia	45900
Morocco	450
Mexico	1500
Moldova	2400
Netherlands	300000
Germany	700000
Norway	76662
Portugal	1238
Russia	47100
South Africa	30000
Romania	2600
Slovakia	3000
Switzerland	32000
US	9660000
Sweden	110000
Turkey	800
Ukraine	144000
Hungary	7000
UK	722380
Italy	89000



